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**THIS STATE HAS
"BOUNDRIES" (SIC), BUT NO
FOCUS:
A REVIEW**

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Louisiana Biographical Dictionary: People of all Times and Places Who Have Been Important to the History and Life of the State. Somerset Publishers, St. Clair Shores, MI, 1999. \$87.50.

Somerset Publishers produce biographical dictionaries of some of these United States. The Louisiana volume does not instill confidence in their efforts. Sloppy printing, sloppy proof-reading and sloppy and turgid writing are just the beginning of the problems with this book – the title of this review features one of their glaring spelling errors from the foreword.

But the major problem with this book seems to be focus, or rather, the lack of focus. Focus! There is none! Obscure personages with the most tenuous link to the state are included. Others, who are long associated with Louisiana are ignored. The publishers do claim in their foreword that, of the persons included in the work, some just happen to have been born in the state but achieved their fame or importance elsewhere. Others were born in another state -- or country -- but became important in Louisiana.

But the inclusion of twelve pages on William Henry Harrison is baffling to say the least. Even more baffling is the inclusion of a biography of Abraham Lincoln along with a discussion of the Civil War running to thirty-five pages! Lincoln made a trip to New Orleans in his youth, stayed a few days and went home. Teddy Roosevelt probably spent more time in Louisiana than Lincoln! Huey Long, dynamic and controversial populist governor of the thirties, merits only seven paragraphs!

William Boring, architect and native of Illinois, who laid out the plans for Bogalusa, Louisiana but spent most of life teaching and pursuing his profession at Columbia University, is given almost four pages. H.H. Richardson, the great exponent of the Romanesque Revival in architecture, was born in St. James Parish, Louisiana. He is not included in this work.

The list of famous people ignored by the compilers but who meet the criteria expressed in the foreword is long. Just off the top of my head, these include such luminaries as: Mahalia Jackson, P.G.T. Beauregard, Braxton Bragg, Antoine “Fats” Domino, Etienne de Bore, Alejandro O'Reilly, Lafcadio Hearn, Clarence John Laughlin, Robert Penn Warren, Cleanth Brooks, Jayne Mansfield, Ernest Gaines, Moon Landrieu, Paul Prudhomme, Jerry Lee Lewis, Jimmy Swaggert, St Frances Cabrini, Henry Morton Stanley, David Farragut, David Duke, Stephen Ambrose, Geoffrey Beene, Craig Claiborne, Rex Reed, James Carville, Bernardo de Galvez, Louis Armstrong, Wynton or Ellis or Branford Marsalis, Lee Harvey Oswald, Oliver Pollack -- the list could go on.

I cannot recommend that any library purchase this book, especially at the price asked! The entries are too misleading for a novice researcher to gain a good view of who was important in Louisiana history. The experienced researcher will be more annoyed than excited to find such a sloppy reference tool.

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